

*Congress of the United States*  
*House of Representatives*

June 2, 2014

The Honorable Gary W. Devansky  
Interim Network Director - VISN 4  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
323 North Shore Drive, Suite 400  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Dear Director Devansky:

As you are aware, reports have indicated that as many as 700 veterans have been denied or delayed access to medical care at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) while waiting on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) New Enrollee Appointment Request (NEAR) List. This news is extremely troubling, particularly given the lack of transparency and accountability at VAPHS relating to the legionella outbreak and recent revelations of widespread "secret waitlists" at other VA medical facilities.

Veterans deserve a full and open investigation into this matter by the VA, complete with actions to hold those individuals who are responsible for the backlog accountable and appropriate steps to ensure that this will never happen again.

According to information that I have received, veterans are placed on the NEAR List after they apply for medical care at the VA and are determined to be eligible to receive it. The appropriate VA medical center is then responsible for contacting these veterans directly, which VAPHS failed to do for many veterans, in some cases for as long as two years. Apparently, the management at VAPHS, including, notably, Director Terry Gerigk Wolf, only recently discovered the existence of this backlog.

Even more disturbing, though, are reports that some in the VA advised or instructed the management at VAPHS to avoid informing Congress.

These issues warrant your immediate attention to provide veterans, their families, and the public at large with much needed answers. To that end, I respectfully request that you provide the following in writing to my office within ten business days:

1. A complete accounting of all lists used by VAPHS for managing veterans' medical care, to include the following information for each list:
  - a. Number of individuals currently pending;
  - b. Average wait time;
  - c. Oldest/longest pending entry;

- d. Highest and lowest number of pending entries at any point in the last three years;
  - e. The names of all VA officials responsible for monitoring the list and how often they receive reports, either formal or informal, on the status of that list;
2. An explanation of any incentives, financial or otherwise, that exist for VA officials based on those lists;
3. An explanation of any audits, including their frequency, of any such lists to ensure they are not being manipulated;
4. An explanation of the causes of the NEAR List backlog at VAPHS and specific actions that are being taken to resolve it, including measures to identify and hold accountable those who are responsible for failing to contact veterans for up to two years;
5. The names and positions of any VA officials who advised or instructed the management at VAPHS to avoid informing Congress about the waitlist, and if none, what specific steps your office is taking to investigate these charges and identify such individuals; and,
6. A list of bonuses paid in the last three years to any VA official named.

Our local veterans deserve nothing less than your complete candor in fulfilling these requests and resolving this issue as soon as possible. My office stands ready to offer whatever assistance that we can to ensure that this occurs without delay.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these requests. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Ryckman in my office at (202) 225-2065.

Sincerely,



Keith J. Rothfus  
Member of Congress

KR/BR

cc: The Honorable Sloan D. Gibson, Acting Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs  
The Honorable Richard J. Griffin, Acting Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs  
The Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
The Honorable Michael Michaud, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
U.S. Senator Pat Toomey  
U.S. Senator Bob Casey  
The Honorable Tim Murphy  
The Honorable Mike Doyle  
The Honorable Mike Kelly